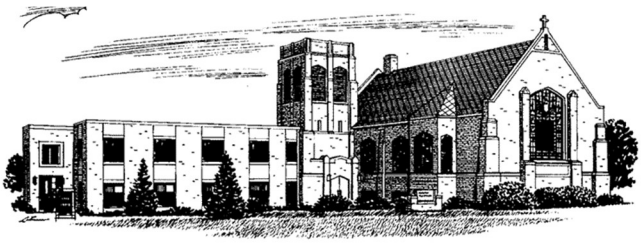
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer of 2023 (beginning June 4):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR APRIL 2023

Hear the good news:
God so loved the world that God gave God's only Son,
so that all may receive life.
This promise is for you!

These are the words that have opened our worship service during this season of Lent, a time when we have been honest about who we are and our failure to live fully as God intends. Yet, the honesty does not stop there. We also hear the honesty of who God is for us - a God who loves the whole world, a God who loves you (individually and collectively), a God who gives life.

This morning at worship (March 26), I felt some of the emotions that go with lament - grief, sorrow, fear. I also felt those emotions that accompany hope - contentment, peace, strength. Any or all of those feelings seemed to fill the room. As we prepare to enter Holy Week, I am readily aware of some of the emotions that accompany the week - excitement, anger, sadness, thankfulness, love - as we hear of Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, the meal with his friends, the betrayal, denial, his crucifixion and death. But we also know that our emotions do not stop there, as we are reminded *"This promise is for you!"* The emotions of surprise and joy will be there, too, as we gather to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, and the life he gives - abundant life that is our now and for eternity.

I invite you to join me in worship during this holiest of weeks, feeling all the emotions of our Savior's story, and rejoicing with loud "alleluias" as we celebrate his resurrection!

-Pastor Joan

We will meet on **Saturday, April 22 at 9am** to prepare our grounds for the growing season! Bring gloves and tools that would be helpful. We could also use volunteers for weekly mowing. Please contact Brad Frey at 269/921-8618 with interest and availability so we can prepare a schedule.

General Information

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Watch weekly emails and door signage for any change in protocol. As of printing, masks are encouraged for those who feel so inclined but not required. Nursery workers and communion assistants will wear masks.

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kathleen & Phillip Preston are at Caretel in St. Joseph;
Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/1 Shadden Gulley
4/1 Susan Harris
4/2 Laura Hicks
4/3 Landen Alexander
4/3 Brian Culverhouse
4/4 Shawn de la Foret
4/4 Elizabeth Gaspari
4/4 Elise Olson
4/4 Margot Olson
4/8 Janet Larson
4/9 Scott Kohs
4/11 Alaina Bradley
4/13 Marilyn Lucy
4/14 Lorelei Gorman
4/15 Corrine Ondraka
4/19 Bob Kynast
4/20 Claudia Staude
4/21 Fritz Knauf
4/22 Addison Osgood
4/23 Juliet Jacob
4/23 Ava Osgood
4/25 Clementine Brueck
4/25 Gayle Peterson
4/26 Michael Breyen
4/26 Thomas Siewert
4/27 Linda Pater
4/28 Brooke Henderson

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

4/16 Kathi & Terry Anserello

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

SYMPATHY

We offer our condolences and prayers to Laurie Caple upon the death of her husband

Jim Caple

on March 19, 2023. A funeral was held at Saron on March 25.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

CONGRATULATIONS

We are happy to announce Saron's mortgage with Thrivent is paid off as of March 1, 2023! The financial committee made the decision to pay off the mortgage early to save the church several hundred dollars in interest this year. What a nice feeling to not have a mortgage hanging over our heads!

FORTIFY & fly

Spring is here and progress on our projects is full steam ahead! Council has signed contracts to move forward with the Roofing & Drainage Upgrade and bids are finally coming in for the Sanctuary & Chancel Flooring/ Accessibility Project. As we receive more details, we'll pass them on to you!

Worship

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks can be payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Please take them home after the 2nd service to enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron.**

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. All are welcome!

We are planning to receive new members on April 23. Are you interested in becoming a member of Saron or learning more about faith from the Lutheran perspective? If so, plan to attend our informational meeting regarding membership and the Lutheran tradition on Sunday, April 16, following the 11am service or contact Pastor Joan.

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that occasionally need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

April 2: Palm Sunday
Matthew 21:1-11
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27:66

April 9: Easter Sunday
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4
Matthew 28:1-10

April 16: 2nd Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14a, 22-32
Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

April 23: 3rd Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:14, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

April 30: 4th Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:42-47
Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

YOUTH GROUP

On March 5, our youth group (and a few younger kiddos) met for a pool party and taco bar. It was a wet and wildly fun time!

Watch your email for more information on April 30 gathering. Friends always welcome!

Contact Claudia at staude.claudia@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate study between the two services (9:40am-10:30am):

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

Bible Study TOGETHER

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Beginning **April 13,** we will study the book of Proverbs, with the theme "God's Standard or Gold Standard." Cost of the accompanying book is $4. You are invited to join the discussion on **Thursdays from 9:30-11:00am in the upstairs lounge.** Contact Pastor Joan if you have any questions. This class is open to all interested in attending, for one session or many.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Following the Lenten break, we will resume our studies on **Tuesday, April 11.** For the next few weeks, we will read and discuss "Your God is Too Small" by J. B. Phillips. The author writes that the trouble with many of us today is that we have not found a God big enough for our modern needs, that is, we suffer from a limited idea of God. The book explores the ways in which we can find a truly meaningful and constructive God for ourselves, big enough to account for our life experiences and big enough to command our highest admiration and respect.

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6 pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

FORUM & fellowship

Setting the Captive Free?

Do Justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

What is meant by *justice* in the Bible? Is it a focus on *doing justice* by practicing equity, mercy, inclusion, sharing God's bounty with all and treating others and God's creation with honor? Or, is it meting out judgement and punishment? We see both in Scripture, but which definition is directed more at the individual and which more at governing institutions and, of course, God? When it becomes necessary to mete out justice, how can we still *do justice* to those who are in prison? How can our actions of doing justice to them at that point help *set them free* whether they are still incarcerated or have been released?

American incarceration rates are among the highest in the world. Around 7% of our population is incarcerated at some level in any given year. The recidivism rate is even more troubling. On average, 44% are returned to prison after one year of being released and 77% after five years. In Norway, by comparison, .00064% of their population is incarcerated at some level in any given year. The recidivism rate; 20% after one year and 25% after five years. What is the difference? What would have to change if we were to achieve these kinds of results? At our core, do we even want to? What does God want?

Please join us as we dig into the meaning of *doing justice* in our society and working to set the captive free when **Forum & Fellowship returns on April 19!**

Ed Staude is the facilitator of this group. We typically meet the first and third Wednesday of each month in the lounge from 7pm to 8:30pm. Bring a friend! All are welcome!

April 2nd, 6:30 in the upstairs lounge, our discussion will center on a non-fiction selection by author Tracy Kidder. “Strength in What Remains" is the story of Deo who arrives in the U.S. from the horrors of civil war and genocide in Burundi with $200.00, no English and no contacts to care about him. With the help of strangers, his journey leads to Columbia University Medical School and a life devoted to healing. Unforgettable.

May 7th the choice is "The Violin Conspiracy" by Brendon Slocumb. A Black, classical musician on the rise goes on a desperate quest to recover his great-great-grandfather's stolen heirloom violin on the eve of the most prestigious musical competition in the world. It presents the reader with an underdog hero in the fascinating, cutthroat world of classical music most of us know nothing about. Join in both discussions. We always have a good time and very interesting conversations. Everyone is welcome!

If you want to be on the mailing list to receive all book group information and Zoom links, call Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com

"Literature is news that stays news”
- Ezra Pound

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will meet on **Wednesday, April 12 at 7pm** in the church lounge. Denise will provide Zoom with a link emailed closer to the date. Denise will also lead the study. The lesson information will be sent in a group email. Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

WOMEN’S RETREAT

Mark your calendar – our annual Women’s Retreat is back! It will be held on **Saturday, April 29 from 9am – 4pm at the home of Linda Pater**. Our speaker for the day will be Rev Catherine Belk. The cost for the day will be $20, which will include breakfast and a late lunch. Along with the lesson, we will have music and free time to enjoy each other’s company. This is a wonderful time to get to know each other better. There will be a sign-up in the narthex by the end of March. If you have any questions, feel free to call Linda at 269/369-1178.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn’t love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
Matthew 25:35

On February 23, Mary Zylema, Marilyn Frey, Pastor Joan, Linda Pater, Colleen Lundgren, & Brad Frey were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing dinner for 67 guests. The guests were served a ham dinner, including potato salad, cole slaw, fruit, cookies & bread. The cookies were baked & decorated by Kathi Anserello and Saron’s confirmation class.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Support

The Support Committee meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

THANK YOU!

We love our new clipboard carousel in the narthex! Thank you to Marilyn & Dale Lucy for designing and building this wonderful addition to match our existing furniture! I don't think anyone will miss the folding table. Please give it a spin and sign up to be a worship volunteer!

Save the Date!!!

We are excited to annouce the return of our **Blossomtime Grand Floral Parade pre-festivities picnic on May 13, 2023.** The church intends to provide hot dogs, chips, cookies and drinks until we run out. A free will offering will be taken to help with expenses. Contact Sally Schmulh at 269/944-9681 if you would like to help.

Springtime Thoughts on Stewardship

In the January newsletter, we noted that while Saron's focus is placed on stewardship during a specific time each year, typically in the fall, stewardship is not a "campaign" or even a "season." It's a way-of-life. And we're not the first to think that.

Clarence C. Stoughton, Wittenberg, summed it up simply:

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.

W. H. Greever, author and Lutheran minister, wrote:

Christian stewardship is the practice of the Christian religion . . . manifested in attitudes and actions.

One only has to look at our recent attitudes and actions to see that many members and friends of Saron already embrace stewardship as a way-of-life. Our collective commitment to Saron's general fund, ELCA Good Gifts, Soup Kitchen, Lutheran World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Relief, Readiness Center, the diaper collection drive, and other causes is nothing short of outstanding. And that's not to mention members' gifts of time and resources to charitable causes that are not funneled through Saron, *e.g.*, Interfaith Action, Habitat for Humanity, Rotary Club, Lions Club, and others.

But before patting ourselves on the back, we should heed Jesus' admonition, "*So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do . . .*" (Matthew 6:2) and instead look to the future. There is never a shortage of needs at home, in the community, or around the world, so pick a cause and practice Christianity.

* * * * *

Connecting with God on Earth Day – It's All about Giving Back

And here's one of those causes . . . Each year on April 22, more than a billion people celebrate Earth Day to protect the planet from things like pollution and deforestation. Activities such as picking up litter and planting trees make our world a happier, healthier place to live. This year, we're urging Saron to celebrate Earth Day by sponsoring a project that directly helps underprivileged people whose lives are threatened by the environmental crisis.

Climate change contributes to poverty, food insecurity, and famine around the globe. One of the biggest such issues is lack of access to safe water – but it's also one of the most powerful opportunities to create change. A simple water well provides up to 500 families with access to clean safe water. Communities are healthier. People spend less money on medical expenses and more on food and education. And instead of spending hours each day gathering water for the family, women and children have time for work and school. Talk about a future filled with hope!

ELCA Good Gifts (remember the goats and piglets?) facilitates siting and installation of water wells in areas of greatest need. Basic water wells cost $2,500 each, but one can also purchase shares of a well for $250. So this year for Earth Day, let's challenge ourselves and band together to purchase at least half of a well, that's $1,250. But if we can do more – say an entire well? – that would be fantastic! Contributions will be accepted through April 30, 2023 – no amount is too small – we're doing this together! Make checks payable to Saron with the notation "Earth Day Water Well."

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe.

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY	MAUNDY THURSDAY	GOOD FRIDAY	EASTER VIGIL	EASTER SUNDAY
April 2 at 8:30am & 11am	April 6 at 12:15pm & 7pm	April 7 at 12:15pm & 7pm	April 8 at 7pm	April 9 at 8:30am & 11am
EXCITEMENT	CONFUSION	DESPAIR	HOPE	JOY

Our 11am and 7pm worship services will also be available via Zoom.
There will be an Easter Breakfast between services with Youth Activities/Egg Hunt beginning around 10:15am.

B L E S S E D

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER

SAVE THE DATE - LIVE WALK!

Sunday
May 21
2023

Watch for more information!

April 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 **Palm Sunday** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**3** 11am Prayer Group	**4**	**5** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**6** **Maundy Thursday 12:15pm & 7pm**	**7** **Good Friday 12:15pm & 7pm**	**8** **Easter Vigil 7pm**
9 **Easter Sunday** 8:30am Worship 9:40am Breakfast/ Youth Activity & Hunt 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**10** 11am Prayer Group	**11** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Deborah Circle	**13** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**14**	**15**
16 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 12pm Prospective Member Meeting	**17** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Church Council	**18** 6pm Bible Study	**19** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**20** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**21**	**22** 9am Spring Cleanup
23/30 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **New Members Received (23rd)**	**24** 11am Prayer Group	**25** 6pm Bible Study	**26** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**27** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **Soup Kitchen Day**	**28**	**29** 9am Women's Retreat